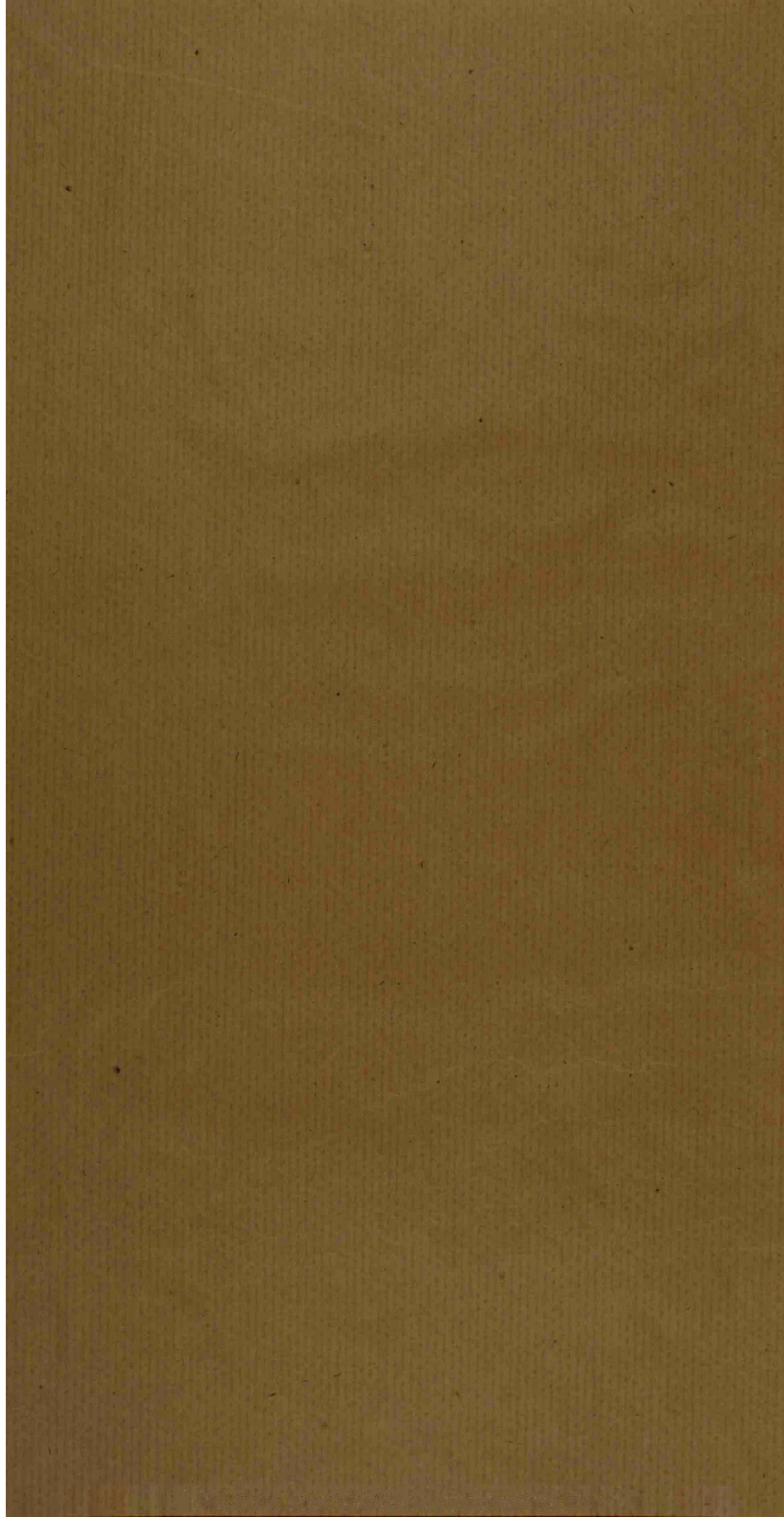


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REPORT ON THE RAWALPINDI RIOTS



BY

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee,

AMRITSAR.

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FOREWORD.

The heart-rending news of the occurrence of serious communal disturbances at Rawalpindi on the night of the 14th June 1926 was first received in the S. G. P. C. office on telephone at about 11-30 that night. The Secretary and the Assistant Secretary remained on the phone for the whole night. Messages about riots continued to be received from Rawalpindi at short intervals. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police Rawalpindi were requested on phone to take proper action. The Chief Secretary, Punjab Government and S. Jogindra Singh, Minister for Agriculture, were also phoned to the same effect. Both of them assured the S. G. P. C. of rendering timely help. At about one midnight we enquired from the Rawalpindi City police about the state of affairs. One Alayar Khan replied that every thing was going on alright and that the situation was under control.

Half an hour after this we received another message from Rawalpindi to the effect that a part of the city was on fire, but that the police was nowhere to be found to render help and check the mischief. The Secretary S. G. P. C. once more rung up the city police and complained that Alayar Khan had given the S. G. P. C. wrong information. On this the telephonic connection on the police side was immediately discontinued, and when we rung up again, the police refused to hear us.

At four A. M. we were informed in a private message that the military had reached on the spot, that none could move out but that that no steps were still being taken to extinguish the fire. On this the S. G. P. C. sent an urgent telegram to S. B. Mehtab Singh, who was then at Nankana Sahib to immediately proceed to Rawalpindi. The S. B. left for the place by the first train. An account of what he saw and the result of his enquiry were submitted to the S. G. P. C. in the form of this report on the first July, 1926.

This report also deals with the significant dacoity at Saidpur immediately following the Rawalpindi trouble.

The publication of the report has been delayed owing to certain reasons, over which the S. G. P. C. had no control.

General Secretary,

S. G. P. C.

REPORT

Re: Rawalpindi disturbances.

On 15th June 1926 at about 10. A. M., I received the following telegram at Nankana Sahib from the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Head quarters at Amritsar:— "Serious riots at Rawalpindi Sikh quarters on fire General massacre situation most serious Start for Rawalpindi immediately." In compliance with the above instructions I decided to start by the first train and wired to the S. G. P. C. at Amritsar and the Law Department of the S. G. P. C. at Lahore that more definite information and instructions should be furnished to me at the Lahore Railway Station that very evening. I left Nankana Sahib for Lahore by the afternoon train. The S. G. P. C. representatives met me at the Lahore Railway Station with some newspapers, but no definite information or instructions from the S. G. P. C. Raja Narindra Nath, Doctor Gokal Chand Narang, both of the Punjab Council and Mr. Chatterji of the Associated Press met me in the train but they too had no more information than myself. On 16th June in the morning we came across one Sikh youngman of the Military Accounts Department at Gujarkhan Railway Station and another of the same department at Mandra junction. They were both present at Pindi with their families at the time of the disturbances and had been permitted by their officers to place their families in safety away from the city. They had done so and were returning to their duties. One of them had been actually present in the Singh Sabha at the time of the riots, so from between the two we made out a fairly connected version of the affair. They showed us their permits to enter the city and told us that entry into the city without the permit was prohibited. We got down from the train at Pindi Railway Station and were met at the door of the carriage by a Sikh Police officer in plain clothes but well-known to me. He informed us that the entry into the city was not allowed without permits. On our enquiry he told us that we could try for a permit from the European D. S. P. present in the Railway Police Station. On appearing before the above-mentioned officer our request was refused. We asked him where from could we obtain the required permit. He told us that we were all men of position and that we could show our visiting cards to the officer who would bar our entry into the city and then it would become the duty of those officers to produce us before the authority who would issue permits. We adopted this course and produced our visiting cards to the officer in-charge of the European guard. He refused to let us pass and our explanation as to the bona-fides of our visit did not appeal to him. On our request that we should be produced before some officer for obtaining permit, he replied that it was not his business. In the

meanwhile Bhagat Jaswant Singh and some other friends came up and through their help we appeared before Seth Adam ji, Honrary Magistrate and obtained the necessary permits from him. We were now permitted to enter the city. In the city, European and Gurkha soldiers were much in evidence with machine-guns here and there. A number of respectable citizens like Bhagat Jaswant Singh and Lals Kanshi Ram Amolak Ram took us round the shops and buildings which had been destroyed by fire. Smoke in many places and suppressed flames in one place were still issuing and every where near the scenes of destruction, the heat and the smell of the burning of the various grains, molasses, cloth etc. was simply unbearable. Practically the whole of the Ganj Mandi was in ashes, there being only a few exceptions here and there. Some shops and houses occupied by Muslims stood out conspicuously, hovering over the remains and ruins of the once flourishing grain market. A block of buildings belonging to L. Kanshi Ram also remained intact. L. Kanshi Ram who was one of ~~other~~ guides, explained *our* to us that when the Mandi was being fired and the shop-owners were being prevented by the police from rushing to save their properties, he managed to slip through the police force and reach his shops. Once there he called his men together to stand guard over the block of buildings belonging to him. The fire kindling mob on being challenged passed on to other shops and thus his property was saved.

Besides the general destruction in the Mandi various other places had also been burnt down. We visited all such places and every where the story of robbery and rapine was repeated by the victims. We were taken to a place where a Muslim Government servant was residing in quarters over the top of some Hindu shops. When the Mob attempted to set fire to these shops, the Muslim Government servant cried out, "Spare a Muslim and his family." The mob desisted but called out "Come down and show us if you are really a Muslim." The gentleman came down and gave them convincing proof of the correctness of his statement. On this the shops under his residence were spared and those on the opposite side were fired and destroyed. There were all kinds of allegations against the police, some going even so far as to say that the police actually took part in setting fire to the shops and buildings. We saw the half burnt shops under the Damdama of Baba Khem Singh Sahib. Tikka Sant Singh, the grandson of Baba Khem Singh Sahib was at Murree when the disturbances broke out. Learning on the phone that the mob was firing the houses, he consulted a high Government officer and rushed to Pindi on his Car. On seeing the mob setting fire to his grand father's Damdama, he remonstrated with them. He was attacked and in defence of his person (and property fired several revolver shots. It is alleged that three Muslims fell during this attack on the Damdama.)

Three Hindu women were alleged to have been carried away by members of the mob. Two had already been recovered from the possession of some Muslims.

It was alleged that the real cause of the disturbance was the building of a Cinema on Sardar Bahadur Malik Mohan Singh's land taken on lease by Rai Bahadur Naranjan Singh of Peshawar. We inspected the Cinema at the back of the Jumma masjid. The Jumma Masjid and the Cinema open

in different quarters of the city. The back wall of the Jumma Masjid is about two hundred feet long and about twenty five or thirty feet high. It is a blind wall, having no doors, windows or skylights. At the back of this wall all along the length are residential houses with a width of 45 feet, the property of the Masjid, but occupied by Hindu tenants. In front of these houses is a lane 12 feet broad. Across this lane is the land on which Cinema has been built having an open space 20 feet broad at the back of the Cinema. The back wall of the Cinema has two shops opening on the open space of 32 feet, twenty belonging to the Cinema and twelve to the public lane. The back wall of the Cinema Hall is blind. The position of the Cinema with regard to the mosque is such that a band playing in the court-yard or in the Hall of the Cinema could hardly be heard at the door of the mosque situated as it is on a different frontage of another street. Such being the circumstances it is not at all strange that the unreasonable demand of Muslims for the demolition of the Cinema was not acceded to either by the Municipality or by the Courts. It is alleged that having raised the storm over the Cinema affair, the young Muslim stalwarts could not control the movement which fell into the hands of the *Mullas*, one of them being a notorious agitator alleged to have been turned out by the North Western Frontier Provincial authorities. For a long time past the passions of the mob were excited by the Mullas against the Sikhs simply because the proprietor of the Cinema site and the lessee of the Cinema both happened to be Sikhs. The relations of the Sikhs and Muslims all over the Panjab have been so admirably good that it is a matter of great pain and surprise that a serious communal breach was brought about over a matter which was purely personal and private and in which the Sikh Community as such was very little interested. Had a timely appeal been made to the S. G. P. C. by leaders like Doctor Kitchlew, the things could have been easily and amicably settled. As it was, however the Mullas kept the agitation at fever-heat and the irresponsible element among the Muslims population only wanted an excuse to break out of all control. Such was the state of Muslim feelings when the Martyrdom Anniversary of the fifth Guru arrived. As far back as the memory of the present day Sikhs can go, the procession on such occasions has passed the Jumma Masjid and never any objection has been raised by the Muslims. On the contrary the leading members of the Muslim community have made presents of flowers and fruits to Guru Granth Sahib and of sweat drinks to the Sikhs. This happened some months ago, when a Gurburb day procession passed the mosque. On 13th June the procession passed the mosque after 7. P. M. when it was not the prayer time. The procession passed off safely except its end which consisted of more than a thousand women and children. Some rude remarks were made by a few Muslim roughs standing in front of the mosque and some stray brick-bats also struck a few women. There was a great confusion and uproar and the women ran away in various directions. Some men from the procession returned, restored calm amongst the ladies, remonstrated with the Muslims standing in front of the mosque and the procession passed on without further disturbance.

Next morning there was an over-crowded Diwan in the Singh Sabha building lasting upto midday. Food was then served. At 2. P. M. when

the congregation had gone away, a Mohammadan armed with an axe went right in front of Guru Granth Shaib and called out the Garanthe. He excitedly told him that the Sikhs should bring out their procession once more in front of the mosque as the Muslims were quite ready to accord them a befitting reception. The Garanthe told him that the processions are taken round thrice a year on Gurburb occasions. The next Gurburb will be due some months hence when the procession will again be taken round the town. He further said that yesterday's procession was not meant to annoy the Muslims, nor could any be taken out that day with that object. The man with the axe then went away. In the evening an over-crowded Gurburb Diwan was held once more. At 8. P. M. Chowdhri Sajjan Singh, the president of the Singh Sabha wrote a letter to the Inspector of Police to the effect that solitary Sikhs passing the mosque on their way to the Diwan are being roughly handled by the Muslims roughs and that as the Sikhs will be returning to their homes late at night, police should protect them from annoyance and ill-treatment. Teja Singh and Tara Singh were going to the Kotwali with the letter when they saw a Muslim mob outside the Singh Sabha armed with lathis hooting the Sikhs and shouting Allah-O-Akbar. They returned to the President and the latter added this fact in a note to the letter at 8-15. P. M. This rukka was handed to the Police Inspector within a few minutes, as the police station is close by. The religious Diwan dispersed at about 10. P. M. and the poetical conference then started the proceedings inside the Singh Sabha. Only about five hundred people stopped to take part in it, and some fresh visitors also continued to come in to attend the Kavi Darbar, as it is called. Soon after the Muslim mob outside grew into 500 to 600 persons and began to throw stones and roughly handle the fresh visitors to the Kavi Darbar. They excitedly kept up shouting Allah-O-Akbar and disturb the proceedings inside. They crossed the street and came over to the doors of the Singh Sabha building and attacked the Sikh visitors. Chowdhri Sajjan Singh, the president of the Singh Sabha, S. Teja Singh Wakil and other Sikh leaders earnestly appealed to the Sikhs inside to remain calmly in their places and not to go out. They reminded them of the mandate of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee that they are to suffer peacefully and have not to raise their hands even in their defence. All the Sikhs inside the Singh Sabha acceded to this appeal, most of them very unwillingly. In the meantime a number of Sikh visitors stated to be 20 to 25, who had been roughly handled by the mob had collected at the outer door of the Singh Sabha. Muslim mob continued to harass the fresh arrivals with the result that some of these men standing at the door rushed at the mob. The mob believing that the whole congregation was at them, fled in all directions. It is said only six men caused this panic in the mob. Four out of these six followed the mob to some distance. Three of them returned safely, but the fourth went ahead of them got mixed up with the mob, was surrounded and beaten to death. While this episode was being enacted in front of the Singh Sabha other bands of Muslims were setting fire to the buildings in different quarters of the city. The police had after all arrived at the scene of disturbances outside the Singh Sabha, as well as at the Ganj Mandi where the rioters were setting fire to the shops and buildings in a wholesale systematic manner by means of petrol

and kerosine oil. The Hindus blame the Sikhs gathered in the Singh Sabha for looking on at the work of destruction of the Mandi and not extending a helping hand to extinguish the fire. The Sikhs blame the police for preventing them from going to the Mandi. The police have the excuse that by allowing five or six hundred enraged Sikhs to come on to the scene of disturbances would have meant a great deal more blood-shed than had already resulted. It is admitted by the Sikhs that in spite of police resistance they could have reached the Mandi by fighting their way through the police-barrier, but that their own leaders laid a strict command on them not to resist the order of the police by any manner or means, as the S. G. P. C. orders were for Sikhs to that effect. In my opinion all these different versions are well-founded. The position on the spot was so complicated that confusion paralysed reason. The police may have had good reason not to allow the Sikhs to go to the Mandi but they are themselves alleged to have done nothing to save the Mandi. It seems to be a well-founded allegation that a large number of petrol and kerosine oil consistors were used by the rioters for the purpose of setting fire to 172 shops destroyed in the Mandi and scores of other buildings in the various quarters of the city. If the police were upto their duty they could have seized the reservoir or petrol or kerosine oil and stopped the work of destruction. It is alleged that the rioters had a cartful of these materials with them and that the police neither seized them nor interfered with their work. Such allegations strengthen the case for a sifting and independent inquiry into the whole affair. There seems to be very little doubt in the charge that cantonment and Municipal Fire Brigades rendered no timely help for extinguishing the fire. No public or private Agency having made any effort to put out the fire, it only ceased its work when nothing more was left to be destroyed. The loss is estimated variously upto three crores of rupees and can in no case be less than one crore.

After seeing the various places affected by the fire our party saw the injured persons in Hospital. We were told that so far 11 Muslims had died and 27 reported as injured. Two Sikhs and one Hindu had died and 16 were reported injured. It was stated that the numbers of the dead and wounded were much larger but that the parties had removed them from the scene of the struggle. I have already given the story of the death of one Sikh over night. The second was surrounded and killed next morning while on way to his office at Chak-Lala. After leaving the Hospital we received a message that S. B. Malik Mohan Singh wanted to see us at the Municipal Hall, where a meeting of members was in progress. We went there and after the meeting had an interview with Mr. Ferguson the Deputy Commissioner. He treated us courteously but could not express any opinion as to the apportionment of the blame as the inquiry was still in progress. I brought to his notice two allegations that had been made before me to show that the Police could be well aware of the coming riots and yet did not take steps to stop them. One was that an iron-smith working in a shop under the Jumma Masjid had sold chhavis worth Rupees three hundred and fifty to Muslims during the day previous to the night of riots. The second was that the Police Inspector had seized one hundred chhavis from a Muslim mob assembled in the Imam-bara at midday pervious to the night of riots. Mr. Ferguson himself had no doubt as to the utter falsity of

these allegations but in order to satisfy me, he took me and Bhagat Jaswant Singh to the police station and asked me to repeat my questions to the Inspector-Incharge, whom he directed to reply truthfully. The Inspector admitted that on the day previous to the night of riots, handles had been put to four or five axe-heads at the iron-smith's shop under the Juma-Masjid. He further admitted that he had seized four or five axes from some members of a Muslim crowd roaming about in the streets on the afternoon preceeding the night of riots. Mr. Ferguson remarked as to the extent of exaggeration that was going on, to which I replied that the matter required further elucidation as there were obviously some basis for the allegations that the police were aware of the forthcoming trouble. The Police Inspector pleaded that the axes were not covered by the Arms Act to which I replied that the Inspector could only have seized them because he expected trouble from Muslim mob. The Inspector kept quiet. Mr. Ferguson then asked him, why no report was made to him of these matters, to which he replied that the seized axes had been duly deposited in the Malkhana. Mr. Ferguson told us that all sorts of allegations were being made by parties against each other. As an instance he told us that it has been reported to him that the procession taken out by the Sikhs was in an aggressive attitude, because fifteen thousand people joined it as compared with two thousand on previous occasions, the Akalis guarding the ladies and children in the procession had Kirpans on their shoulders and that there was a lorry with words "Hospital Lorry" on it, following the procession in expectation of casualties expected in the fight. Mr. Ferguson made these remarks in all seriousness. I asked the Inspector if the Akalis guarding the women and children had naked or sheathed Kirpans on their shoulders. He admitted that they carried sheathed Kirpans. I drew the attention of Mr. Ferguson to this reply and told him that even admitting the truth of the allegation for the sake of argument, what difference does it make if a few Akalis on duty round the ladies instead of carrying sheathed Kirpans in their hands or belts put them on their shoulders in a sheathed condition. As regards fifteen thousand people joining the procession as compared with two thousand on the previous processions, Bhagat Jaswant Singh vehemently protested against the falsity of the allegation from his personal knowledge of past fifteen years. I told Mr. Ferguson that each time a Gurburb procession had to be taken out the management for the time being exerted their very best to procure the attendance of the largest possible number of people to join and take part in it. It may be that owing to Sunday and the evening time of the procession larger number joined this time than on previous occasions but to draw sinister conclusions from this fact would be relying on a false clue. As regards Hospital Lorry following the procession I had already learnt that this Lorry contained two bags of sugar, a large block of ice, some utensels for preparing the Sharbat, some brass tumblers for drinking it and some ashes for cleaning the utensels. Bhagat Jaswant Singh and I told these facts to Mr. Ferguson, at the same time denying that it was a hospital lorry. The Inspector called out that he had shown the words "Hospital Lorry" on it to a Magistrate. On this Malik Sher Mohammed Revenue Assistant came forward there and then and corroborated the Inspector. Mr. Ferguson took Bhagat Jaswant Singh and myself to task for contradicting him. He said he had remarked that the words

"Hospital Lorry" were written on the lorry and that this appeared to be true. I told him that I had not seen the Lorry and the words "Hospital Lorry" may have been on it on account of its having once been a Hospital Lorry before it was auctioned and purchased by its present owner. In any case the use to which it was put in the procession is the material issue and about that there could be no doubt. This pacified Mr. Ferguson. From the attitude and words of the Police Inspector we had no doubt that these points taken up by the D. C. had been furnished to him by the Police Inspector in his reports. From the presence and uninvited but ready corroboration furnished by Malik Sher Muhammad Khan, we had a misgiving that a sphere of prejudice and suspicion against the Sikhs had already come into existence. We accompanied Mr. Ferguson to his car. I told him that had the Sikhs decided upon a fight or even feared a fight how could they take about fifteen hundred women and children in the procession. Mr. Ferguson remarked that every thing will be enquired into. I plainly told him that after the incidents reported to him and discussed by him with us we had no doubt that he and other superior officers were being not furnished with correct version of the affairs and that the case of the Sikhs was being prejudiced. I appealed to him to sift the truth before placing reliance on the allegations made against the Sikhs in the reports of the subordinate police. Mr. Ferguson laughingly remarked that I had come to teach a D. C. of 17 years experience as to what his duties were. I replied that I did not mean to teach him his duties but meant to put in a word to obtain justice for the Sikhs. I told him to ask some reliable Sikhs, the Sikh version of the allegations made against them in the police reports. I told him that in Pindi there were Sikhs of good position and status like Sardar Bahadur Malik Mohan Singh, the President of Rawalpindi Municipality. Mr. Ferguson stated that Malik Mohan Singh was his friend, and that nothing will be done against the Sikhs without hearing their version about the allegations against them. I thanked him for his promise to find out the truth to which he remarked that he too hoped that my visit to Pindi will be of help to him in restoring calm. I cheerfully promised to do all that lay in my power to obtain that desirable object.

In spite of the promise of Mr. Ferguson to sift the truth I felt very uncomfortable at the inquiry being left in the hands of the Inspector of Police. This feeling was still further increased when I was told that the gentleman had recently come to Pindi after finishing the work of Hindu-Muslim riots at Panipat. I called a meeting of prominent Sikhs and expressed my misgivings to them. They said they had not gone to see the officers as they were abused and called Jholi-chuks. I told them, none of them could be abused more than I was every day of my life and yet I was trying to do my duty. They promised to see the officers and keep them well-informed about the real facts of the case.

From what I learnt the police were quietly preparing cases and holding identifications of culprits in the hospital with the help of injured persons. Hindus and Sikhs told us that their help was not requisitioned by police, nor were their statements recorded. I told the Sikh pleaders to be on the alert. They held a meeting to help their brothers in trouble. Bhagat Jaswant Singh with his usual energy has done a great deal to organise the defence work

so that the Sikhs may not be taken unawares, when the police begins to arrest people for the disturbances which they must do sooner or later.

In the evening Bhagat Jaswant Singh and I again met Raja Narindra Nath, Dr. Gokal Chand Narang and Mr. Chatterji. We had come to more or less the same conclusions on the main features of the disturbances. I authorised them to issue a report on my behalf also, as they were leaving for Lahore the same night and I was staying on at Pindi a little longer.

On the morning of 17th Bakshi Mehtab Singh Advocate came to see me. He told me that two of his relatives had been murdered last night during the loot and burning of Saidpur, a village situated at the foot of Hazara mountains, some twelve miles away from Pindi. I promised to enquire into the matter. He told me that he had seen the D. C. last evening according to my instructions. S. B. Malik Mohan Singh also told me that he had seen the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner and that most of the prejudices created against the Sikhs had been cleared. From this talk it appeared that the officers were mostly prejudiced against the Sikhs by the fact that there was greater loss of the life on the Muslim side. I told them that they should again see and explain the position to the officers. Not a single Muslim had fallen in front of the Singh Sabha, the only place where the Sikhs and Muslims had come to grips. Muslims had mostly fallen in places where the buildings had been destroyed by fire. This showed that they were killed when found committing arson. Tikka Sant Singh Bedi was alleged to have fired revolver shots on the mob which was setting fire to Damdama Sahib and which attacked him on his remonstrating with them. This instance explained the greater mortality on the Muslims. It is a well known rule that aggressors suffer greater losses when the plan of their attack is known to the opposite side and the defence is ready to repel the attack. The mere fact of greater Muslim loss should not prejudice the Sikhs if the facts otherwise were quite clear in their favour. These two and many more gentlemen to whom I explained this position promised to lay it before the officers. It appeared from various sources, that the authorities were well aware that the Muslims were the aggressors but that they could not openly take up that position through fear that it may exasperate the country-side Muslims who might cause mischief to a few Hindus and Sikhs living amongst them in the villages. This may be true but non-arrest of culprits in Rawalpindi may embolden Muslim villagers to perpetrate deeds of arson and robbery with impunity. There are however matters on which opinions very often differ.

SAIDPUR.

Bhagat Jaswant Singh communicated to me that the authorities had no objection to our going to Saidpur. We motored to the village in the afternoon. It is a beautiful garden village situated at the foot of the mountains dividing Rawalpindi and Hazara Districts. On the Pindi side of the mountain is Saidpur and on the Hazara side the Agroor valley, the residence of notorious outlaws and miscreants who love robbery and rapine, as their most creditable pursuits in life. Over the top of the mountain shadowing Saidpur is the natural spring known as Gupat Ganga. Water from various springs

irrigate the gardens of Saidpur. From Gupat Ganga top comes down the only road to the plains passing through Saidpur village. On the night of 16th June Hindu houses and shops in Saidpur were plundered and burnt and two Sahukars Lachmandas and Mali Ram, father and son murdered. We inspected the village which presented a painful scene of destruction and devastation. 31 out of 36 shops of the flourishing village were burnt to the ground. 4 houses of the well-to-do Sahukars were also burnt down. Two Gurdwaras also suffered from the fire. One Gurdwara was fired from the front and had its verandah burnt down. During the day Guru Granth Sahib was kept open in the verandah which was used as a worship Hall. At night Guru Granth Sahib was kept in a room inside the verandah. The door of this room was badly scorched but not entirely burnt down. Guru Granth Sahib was saved. Shop contiguous to the Gurdwara was burnt down. It is probable that the Gurdwara caught (fire from this shop. There is no proof what-so-ever that Gurdwara was fired) at with a view to sacrilege.

The second Gurdwara known as "Maiánwalla" was situated at the back of a Sahukar's house which was entirely burnt down. The Almira for Guru Granth Sahib was in the joint wall of the Gurdwara and the Sahukar. Fire destroyed the wall and the Almira including Guru Granth Sahib was entirely burnt down. Rest of the building and furniture were saved though blackened by the smoke. This was quite a clear case of incidental fire, the front door of the Gurdwara remaining properly locked from outside. Sikh sentiments have been greatly shocked by these acts of sacrilege but I have no doubt that the miscreants did not contemplate these misdeeds and did not commit them in order to outrage the Sikh sentiments. The Police Sub-Inspector Bakshi Farman Ali told us that his estimate of loss of buildings alone was just a little more than twenty-one thousand rupees. We could not imagine how it could be less than fifty thousand rupees in any case. The value of properties carried away by the robbers could not be then estimated but the sum must be enormous because all the thirty one shops and 4 houses were plundered before being burnt and they were the most prominent shops and houses in the village.

The story of the affair which is alleged to have been taken notice of by the police was that after 3. P. M., one Atta Muhammad alias Attaia was coming down to his village which is situated close to Saidpur. As he came down the Gupt Ganga Road he found a large number of men occupying the mountain heights on both sides of the road leading to Saidpur. In that part of the country such an incident was a clear indication that the men were dacoits about to plunder Saidpur. Attaia was challenged and threatened by the dacoits to stop but while fastening his pace he continued to reassure them of his friendliness. The dacoits did not fire at him in order not to give an alarm to the villagers of Saidpur but followed him quick to avoid the mischief to their undertaking resulting from the Attaia's warning to the villagers. Attaia raised an alarm in the village at 8. P. M. and then ran on to his village to fetch help. Hindu villagers were panic stricken and ran to Muslim villagers for protection and help. A quarter of an hour later that is about 8. 15. P. M. the dacoits entered the village from different sides with shouts of "Allah-O-Akbar." They plundered the shops and houses of Hindus already deserted by the owners and then set them all on fire. Lachhmandass and his

son Mali Ram, father and son, the chief sahu-kars of the village are said to have first escaped but returned again to fetch their valuables. They escaped again and concealed themselves in a dilapidated walled enclosure of a weaver about 60 yards up the mountain. There were bundles of fuel faggots lying in the enclosure and both father and son covered and concealed themselves under these bundles. They were both cruelly murdered in this place. It is said that they were noticed, pursued and butchered by the dacoits. The most curious part of the story is that ornaments of gold, account-books and valuable securities were not touched by the murderers. So far so that Mali Ram was found holding valuable gold ornaments in his hands while dead and the account books and valuable securities were found under his dead body. To say the least these facts require some elucidation, as the dacoits were after plunder and not revenge.

After inspecting the spots connected with various incidents we came outside the village and began to make inquiries at the village sitting place, prettily situated on the banks of a gushing stream of pure and cold water. Inspector of police was investigating the case and his men had followed us about during our inspection of various spots. They were also present during our inquiry and from various indications their attitude did not appear to be favourable.

During the inquiry a curious discovery was made. It came out that just after 5. P. M. on the day of the outrage, the Zaildar Akbar and Lambardar Haidar Khan called some Sahukars of the village and told them that a dacoity will be committed in the evening and that they should look after themselves. The Sahukars told them that they were the Sardars of the village and must protect the Hindus as well as send for police help. The Zaildar and the Lambardar assured them that they were alive to their duties, but that the Hindus must also heap up stones on their roofs to encounter the dacoits. The Sahukars came away. A Muslim who was sitting nearby, explained the position of the Zaildar and the Lambardar in this way that "the road coming down from Gupat Ganga heights is the only road to the plains and it passes through Saidpur. The Zaildur and the Lambardar had received information that after midday several groups of ten to fifteen men each, had been noticed coming down the Gupat Ganga Road but none of them had reached the village. It was surmised that these men had concealed themselves in some cave or Nullah, *i. e.* the bed of a mountain stream and meant mischief to the rich village of Saidpur. In warning the Sahukars the village officials had acted as their friends and not their enemies." This appeared to us to be a very plausible explanation. Not a single Muslim had joined the raiders nor had even a single Muslim villager refused protection to Hindus, who flocked to their houses with their wives and children and in some instances with account-books and ornaments. There was however one point which struck us. The Sahukars had requested the Zaildar and Lambardar to send for police protection. It is improbable that the Zaildar and the Lambardar who warned the Sahukars of impending dacoity did not inform the police. Fast tongas for Pindi are available at Saidpur and it is only an hour's journey to Pindi. Golra police station is not very far-off. We were busy finding this out when a constable came up and told us that the Sub-Inspector's orders

were for us to appear before him at once. We went to him. He treated us courteously and took us inside a room. There he told us that information had been received that Akalis were on their way to raid Saidpur to take reprisals against Muslim villagers in revenge for last night's outrage. We told him that this cannot be true, as we had just motored from Pindi and had any such movement been afoot, we must have heard some rumour about it. He replied that his information was positive and that the Akalis had come in motor-lorries and were lying concealed in the forest of village Narala. He further told us that he had sent urgent information regarding this affair to the Superintendent Police at Rawalpindi and that we should not leave the village until his orders were received in order to avoid a suspicion as to our complicity with the expected Akali raid. I asked him if his asking us not to leave the village until the arrival of S. P.'s orders from Pindi was in the nature of a request or an order for in the latter case it will amount to our being under arrest. L. Amolak Ram at this stage introduced me and Bhagat Jaswant Singh to him and informed him that we had come to Saidpur with the permission of the authorities. Our names and the fact that we had obtained the permission to visit Saidpur appeared to have come to the Police Sub-Inspector as a surprise. He said that his asking us to stay with him was in the nature of a request for our own good, but that we were free to go away, if we so desired. We informed him that in that case we would prefer to go but would urge him for his good not to lose sight of us until we had proceeded into the matter of the alleged Akali raid. He very unwillingly agreed to accompany us on our motor to look into the matter. As we came out we saw the Muslim population rushing up the mountain. On inquiry we found that the action of the police had caused a panic through fear of the Akali raid reprisals. We reassured them and they returned to their houses. We then started for Pindi, the Narala forest being on the way. It is on the outskirts of Rawalpindi town. Before entering the forest we asked the Sub-Inspector what conclusion could be drawn from the mere presence of some Akalis in the forest so close to Pindi and so far remote from Saidpur. He admitted that he never believed the information regarding the intended Akali raid but as a precaution he had to inform the S. P. The forest was fully searched. Not a single Sikh was found in it, nor were there any signs of the wheels of any motor-lorry or other conveyance. The Sub-Inspector was very apologetic and accompanied us to Pindi. He entered the B. Division Police post for few minutes and on return informed us that he had phoned to the S. P. that the information regarding the intended Akali raid was entirely unfounded. The conduct of the Sub-Inspector whose name we learnt was Bakhshi farman Ali was mysterious in the extreme. He was very polite and courteous but he sent entirely wrong information to the S. P., and by his tactics stopped us from pursuing the inquiry as to whether the Zaildar and Lambardar had sent information to him at Golra as they had been requested by the Sahukars to do between 5 and 6 P. M. It was suggested by some of my companions that he created an imaginary raid and would have later on shown his services in stopping it, but all that I can say is that I have not been able to fathom his motives.

The result of my inquiry is that the outrage at Saidpur was a very horrifying one. Bakshi Mehtab Singh Vakil in my presence gave some cash

to his aunt (father's sister) at Saidpur for purchasing flour as she had been robbed of her all in that night of horror. Similar was the condition of the most of the well-to-do Hindu villagers. Such outrages are very seldom committed without the complicity of some one from the village, but we found no proof of it in this case. The attitude of the village Muslims was very helpful to the Hindus during the raid and sympathetic afterwards. I am of opinion that it was a non-communal raid of the Frontier type in which Hindus are enveritably the victims on account of their wealth and weakness. The only extra-ordinary feature was the wholesale destruction of buildings by fire. This probably was due to the idea given by the Pindi rioters, none of whom had been arrested till then for arson. My opinion is that Pindi riots have opened up a new and mischievous programme of destruction which will be followed even in non-communal frontier raids, in future.

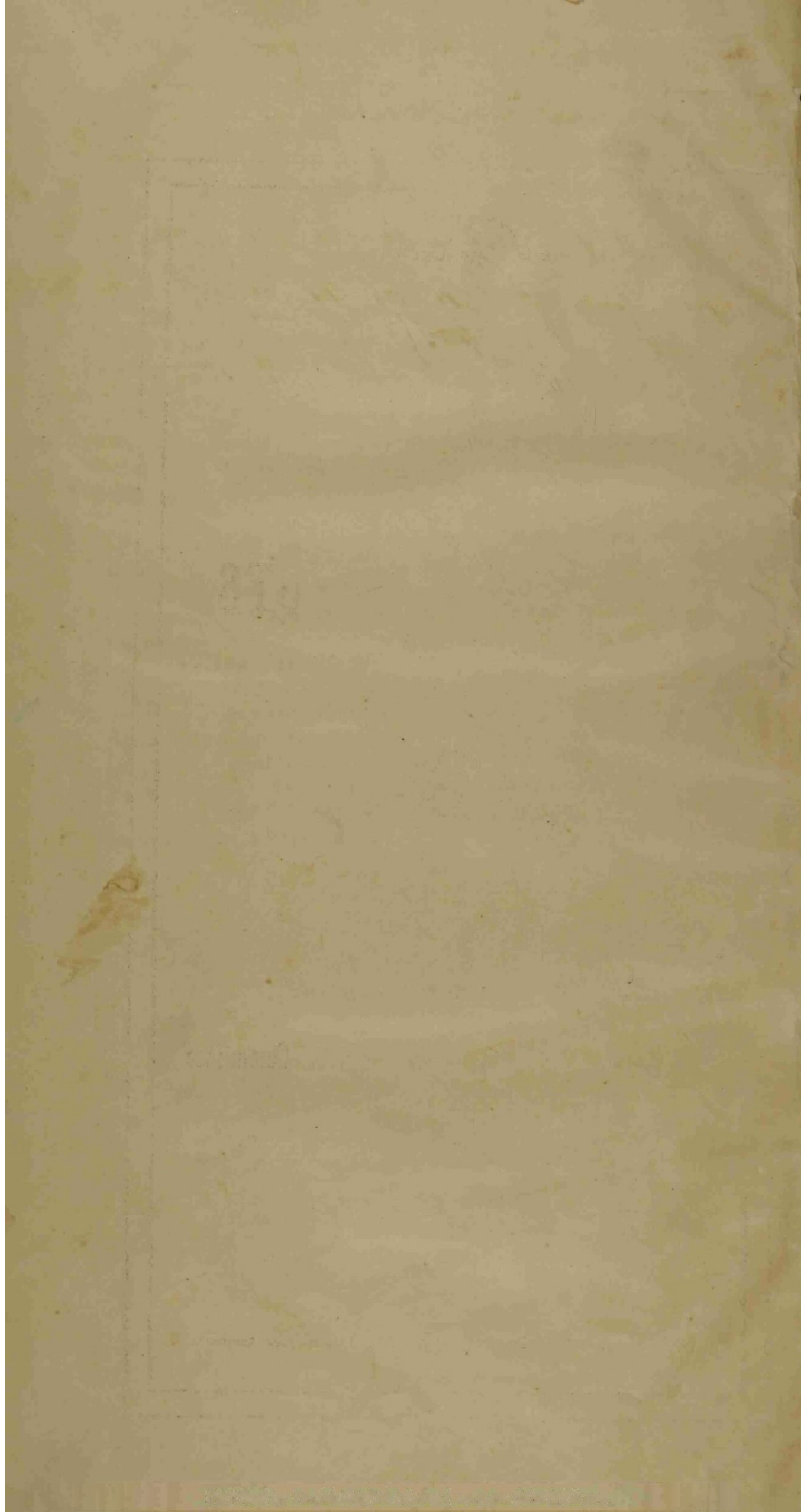
The happenings at Akal Takhat Sahib called me to Amritser on 18th morning and I have been so busy since that I have not been able to submit my report earlier. There have been so many different versions of the affairs at Pindi and Saidpur that I have considered it necessary to write a fairly detailed account of my visit and views. The thing that has grieved me most is that after long years of amity and good will the relations between the Muslims and Sikhs have become strained. It is my heart's desire that Muslim and Sikh leaders should meet together in a conference and so arrange matters that the Pindi incident should be the last to estrange them from each other and that measure should be adopted to bring them together once more by bonds of mutual regard and good fellowship. I am glad that inspite of some bickerings the Hindus and Sikhs are holding together in their common misfortune. If they do not stick together very strongly, they will be simply brushed out of the Frontier districts.

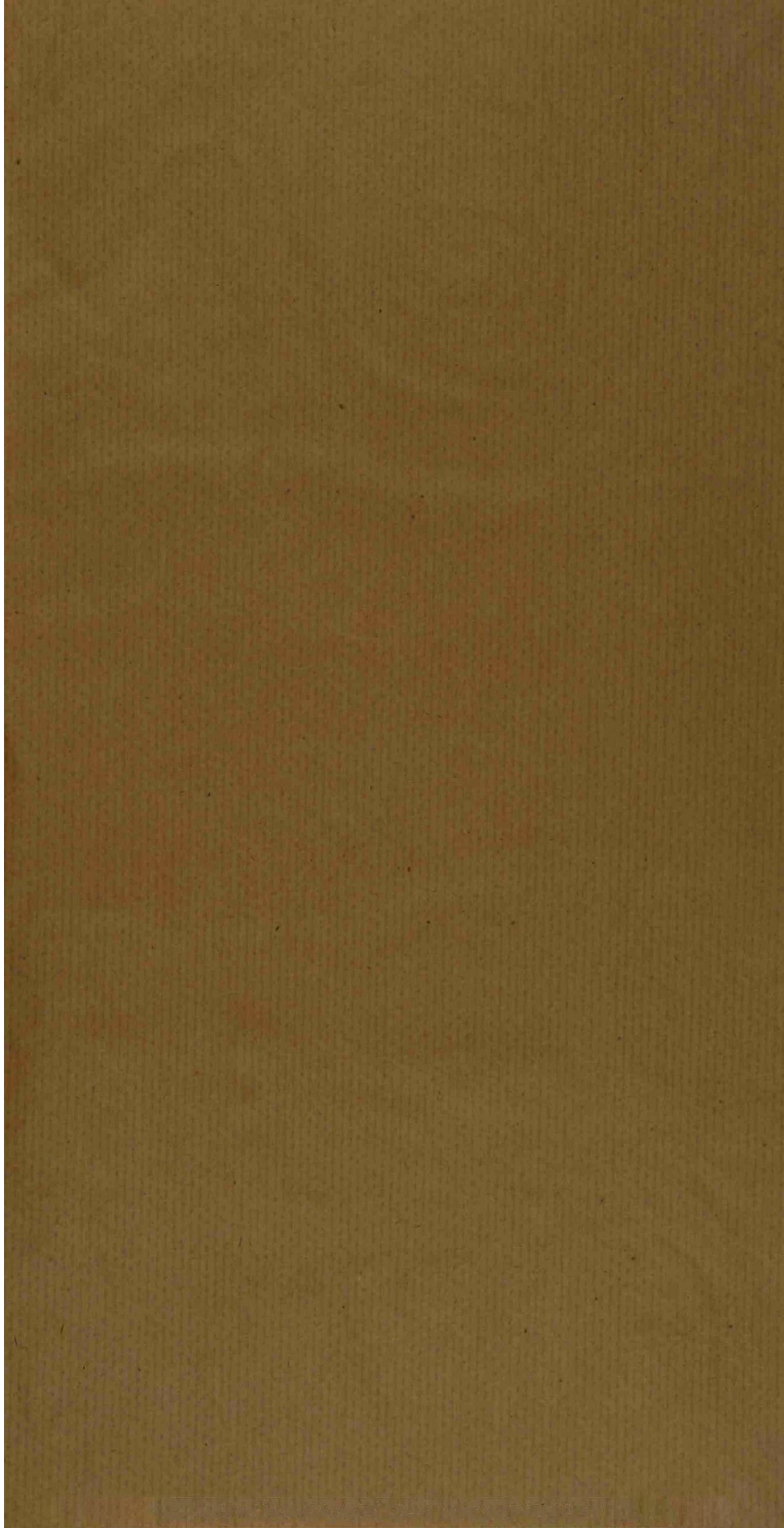
MEHTAB SINGH.

1st July 1926.

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